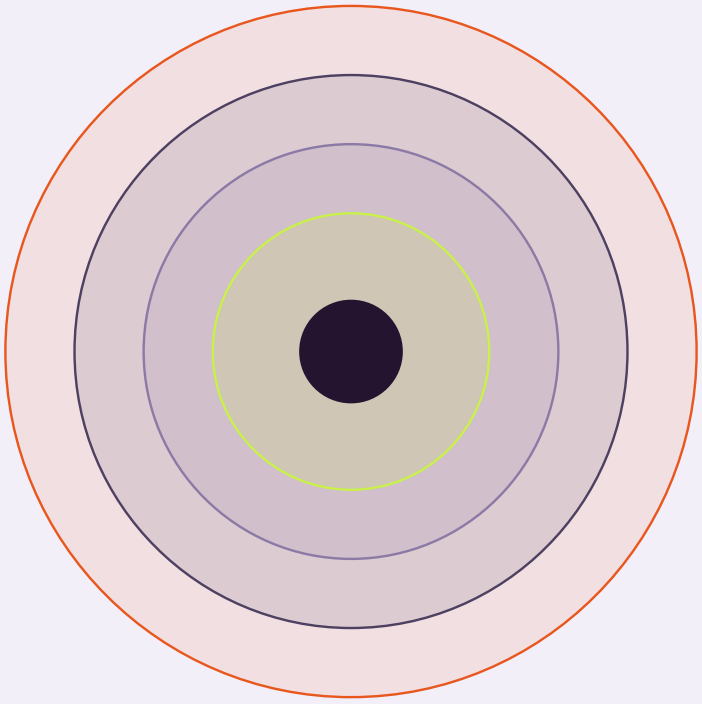


The Answer Is . . .: Reflections on My Life

A reading of the book by Alex Trebek (2020)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of The Answer Is . . .: Reflections on My Life, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Alex Trebek was born in Sudbury, Ontario, in 1940, began his broadcasting career at the CBC, and hosted the quiz show Jeopardy! from 1984 until his death in November 2020. He wrote this short memoir after announcing in March 2019 that he had stage 4 pancreatic cancer. It is a set of brief essays rather than a full autobiography. They cover his childhood in Sudbury, his early years on Canadian radio and television, his move to American game shows, his marriage to Jean, and his life with illness. Running through them are the things he cared about most: curiosity, kindness, steady work and keeping the attention on other people.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Curiosity is a habit you can keep for life, not a trait you either have or lack.

Trebek studied philosophy at the University of Ottawa and spent his working life surrounded by questions on every subject. The memoir treats learning as something you keep choosing, long after school ends. Asking one more question is a decision you can make every day.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A good host makes the other person look good.

Trebek described his job as helping contestants do their best, not performing for the camera. The same rule works at a dinner table or in a meeting: your job is to make room for others. Attention you give away tends to come back as trust.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Where you start shapes you, but it does not decide where you end up.

He grew up in Sudbury, a mining city in northern Ontario, with a Ukrainian-born father and a French-Canadian mother, and spoke both English and French. The early essays show how much of the man came from that home. They also show a young man leaving it to find his own work.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Say yes to the small jobs, because they are how you learn the big one.

His career began at the CBC, where he read the news and hosted a range of programmes before moving to American television in 1973. Hosting a famous show came after years of ordinary broadcasting work. The craft was built one shift at a time.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Kindness shows up in small, repeated acts, not in big statements.

The memoir keeps returning to how people are treated: crew, contestants, and strangers who write in. None of it is dramatic. Decency, in this telling, is mostly routine.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A strong marriage is built from ordinary days together.

Trebek writes warmly about his wife, Jean, whom he married in 1990, and about how much her care meant during his illness. The love story here is not grand gestures. It is two people showing up for each other, day after day.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

When hard news comes, saying it plainly can bring people closer.

He announced his diagnosis himself in March 2019, in a short video, instead of letting it leak. Viewers answered with cards, letters and prayers, and he said that support mattered to him. Being honest about a hard thing gave other people a way to help.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You can be afraid and still turn up for the next day's work.

Trebek kept hosting through his treatment and taped episodes while he was ill. He did not pretend it was easy, and he did not stop. The book shows courage as getting up and doing what the day asks.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Decide how you want to be remembered, then live that way today.

A memoir written in the shadow of illness keeps asking what a life adds up to. The answer it points to has less to do with fame than with how you treated the people around you. You do not need a diagnosis to ask that question.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Write your five answer cards
- [ ] Record one family story
- [ ] Write to your younger self
- [ ] Write down your family health history
- [ ] Name the people who make you look good

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Learn one new thing a day
- ◯ Turn the spotlight outward
- ◯ Send one thank-you note a week

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Write your five answer cards

Take five index cards.

On each, write one question from this page, such as what you are curious about now, and answer it in two sentences. Keep the stack where you will see it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Record one family story

Call a parent, grandparent or older friend this week and ask where they grew up and what their first job was.

Record it with their permission, or write it down the same day.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Write to your younger self

Pick an age when things felt uncertain.

Write one page telling that person what turned out to matter and what did not.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Write down your family health history

Ask relatives which serious illnesses run in the family, and at what ages.

Write it down and take it to your next check-up so your doctor has it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Name the people who make you look good

List three people whose quiet work makes yours possible: a colleague, a partner, a neighbour.

Next to each, write one specific thing they do.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Learn one new thing a day

Each evening, write down one thing you learned that day and where you learned it.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Turn the spotlight outward

In your next three conversations, ask a follow-up question before you tell your own story.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Send one thank-you note a week

Every Friday, write a short note to one person by name, saying what they did and what it meant to you.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

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December 2026

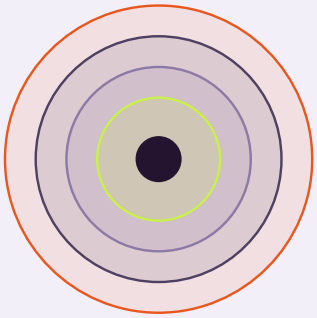
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Live today the way you would like to be remembered. Stay curious, and be kind on the way.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER ALEX TREBEK